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Senate

The Senate met at 11 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

O God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to come, thank You for our Nation and for the freedoms we enjoy. Lord, thank You also for the men and women who gave their lives that we might be free.

Forgive us when our preoccupation with selfish dreams keeps us from surrendering to Your will. Help us to strive each day to give You our best.

Guide our Senators. May nothing deter them from doing Your will. Lord, give them faith to meet each challenge with Your wisdom. Help them to give themselves completely to You, permitting Your peace to guard their hearts.

We pray in Your sacred Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. FLAKE). The majority leader is recognized.

THE PRESIDENT'S BUDGET

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, the President released a budget today. Congress will review his final set of proposals and priorities—his call for new taxes, new spending, and more debt.

ZIKA VIRUS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, just this morning, local health departments confirmed two cases of the Zika virus in two States bordering Kentucky—Indiana and Ohio.

Americans want a better understanding of the administration's efforts to fight this virus and its spread. Americans want to know what the administration's funding priorities are for combatting Zika in a time of limited Federal resources. We appreciate Secretary Burwell coming today to help explain all of this. She and her team will provide a briefing to Senate leaders, committee chairs, and ranking members about a virus Americans are rightly concerned about. Keeping Americans safe and healthy is a top priority for all of us. I am looking forward to hearing what she has to say.

THANKING AMBASSADOR DEREK MITCHELL

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, turning to the nomination we will consider today, our Ambassador to Burma, Derek Mitchell, has staunchly pursued America's interests in an important post. He helped guide our relationship with Burma through a historic transition to elected government. He also served as a trusted and valuable partner in understanding how best to measure the pace and viability of reform within Burma.

I have gotten to know Derek pretty well over the last few years. I offer to him sincere gratitude for all of his advice and counsel. He will be missed. He is a genuine expert on that country. And while he leaves big shoes to fill, I intend to support the man nominated to succeed him.

NOMINATION OF SCOT MARCIEL

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, Scot Marciel has served as the Principal Deputy Executive Secretary since

August 2013, following time in Jakarta as our Ambassador to Indonesia for 3 years. He served as Ambassador for ASEAN Affairs and as Deputy Assistant Secretary for the East Asia and Pacific bureau, responsible for relations with Southeast Asia. Earlier in his career, he served in Vietnam, the Philippines, Hong Kong, Brazil, and Turkey, as well as in the Economic Bureau's Office of Monetary Affairs.

Ambassador Marciel will represent us as a new government is formed in Burma and as America's policies adjust to those changes on the ground. He obviously has a lot of experience. I think it will prove valuable as he works to represent our Nation at a time of truly consequential change in Burma.

Burma's transition to a democratically elected government is an important mark of reform in a country with a long and very troubled history. We know there is more to be done, but the administration can take credit for its efforts, and so can Members of Congress in both parties. Hopefully we can build on that momentum working together.

NORTH KOREA SANCTIONS AND POLICY ENHANCEMENT BILL

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, on one final matter, the regime in North Korea presents serious threats to regional stability, to the security of Americans, to the safety of our allies, and to the well-being of North Koreans themselves.

Pyongyang regularly threatens neighbors, such as South Korea and Japan. It routinely engages in cyber warfare. It repeatedly commits gross human rights violations against its own people and continues to develop a nuclear program that threatens peace in the region and throughout the world. The regime's most recent display of belligerent behavior only underlines that the administration's approach has certainly not worked. Let's

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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